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## Billy Graham trembled before first "crusade" at Peniel

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## Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



### BILLY GRAHAM TREMBLED BEFORE FIRST "CRUSADE" AT PENIEL

By HAMPTON DUNN

PALATKA --- "And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, 'For I have seen God face to face...'" --- Genesis 32:30. From this Biblical passage, a small, white-framed country church on State Road 19 near here was named Peniel Baptist Church when it was founded in 1852.

And it was from the tiny pulpit in this isolated sanctuary that the now famous evangelist Billy Graham launched his first "crusade" in 1938. At most, the little auditorium would hold no more than 125 people. Contrast this with the audiences of 110,000 which crammed London's Wembley Stadium in 1966 to hear Graham. (Photo shows present pastor, the Rev. J. A. Cardoso, in Peniel's pulpit.)

But as a 19-year-old ministerial student, Billy wasn't the poised, articulate, spell-binding speaker he is today. In fact, he trembled with stagefright as he looked out on Peniel's interested congregation. Before the services, he nervously paced around the block where his host pastor lived on Gillis Street in Palatka and rehearsed his sermon over and over. A deacon recalled 25 years later, said after hearing Billy that he'd never make a preacher. How wrong can you get?"

A surprise development took place here while Billy was "converting" many sinners in his first revivals. The pastor, the Rev. Cecil Underwood, discovered that Graham was not a Baptist and had never been baptized the Baptist way of immersion! So it was that the pastor and congregation of Peniel Baptist Church marched young Billy down the sloping white beach of nearby Silver Lake and doused the future famous evangelist.

Graham preached in the Putnam County region for nine months, and then was "ordained" a minister by the St. Johns Baptist Association in a laying on of the hands ceremony at the Peniel church. And, like Jacob, Billy "saw God, face to face."

